

United States Space Command Q&As (through 29 May)

May 21st Brief Q&A:

Q1: Can we get additional guidelines on who can sign the self-nomination letter? Does it have to be a local mayor or elected official? Can it be signed by a non-profit organization or a state official? If the military installation is not within a city can the letter be signed by a state or regional economic development organization?

A1: The nomination letter must be signed a local elected official (Mayor or equivalent) of the community submitting the nomination and endorsed by the state Governor. Third party agencies cannot submit on their behalf.

Q2: Particularly in the case where the installation is not within one city—would it be helpful to have the letter signed by several representatives of the different cities that surround the installation? Or the County commissioners?

A2: If there are several cities within the Metropolitan Statistical Area near a military installation, the Air Force recommends they work together to determine how they could best compete to host the U.S. Space Command Headquarters. At least one mayor (or equivalent) will need to sign the letter and have it endorsed by the state governor. More than one mayor (or equivalent) can sign if desired, but doing so will not make the nomination package any more or less competitive.

Q3: If the local jurisdictions want to be part of the nomination process, should they sign the original letter or send separate letters? And should those be part of the same formal nominations package? If they send separate letters, are there any guides on what they should say?

A3: Only one letter is desired per locality nominated. At least one mayor (or equivalent) will need to sign the letter and have it endorsed by the state governor. More than one mayor (or equivalent) can sign if desired, but doing so will not make the nomination package any more or less competitive.

Q4: If a community fails to self-nominate but otherwise meets the initial screening criteria, will the Air Force still consider the site? Or will they be disqualified following the June 30 deadline?

A4: Communities are required to submit a nomination by the 30 June deadline to be considered. The Air Force will not automatically include a community if they do not nominate.

Q5: Do you have size guidelines for how large the military base should be? We have a pretty small base, does that disqualify us? I'm talking about the 2nd of the 3 minimum criteria.

A5: There are no size guidelines for how large a military installation must be. However, they must have the capacity to provide the required support services listed in the screening criteria to include support to military members and their families with key services like military housing, health care, child care, commissary, personnel and logistics support.

Q6: And all services--- a Navy facility---would count? It doesn't have to be an Air Force base, right?

A6: Correct, USSPACECOM is a Joint service Combatant Command. An installation belonging to any of the services, Army, Navy, Air Force, Space Force or Marine Corps, is eligible as long as it has the

capacity to provide the required support services listed in the screening criteria.

Q7: Also, how will the 25 mile proximity be measured? Is it 25 miles from the city center?

A7: The 25 mile proximity criterion is measured from the perimeter of the Metropolitan Statistical Area to the respective military installation's fence line or gate.

Q8: Are Air Force Stations considered?

A8: Air Force Stations will be considered, however they must have the capacity to provide the required support services listed in the screening criteria.

Q9: How can communities provide additional information other than the very basic nomination contained in the template that was provided? For example, if the communities want to address the screening and evaluation criteria, should this be included in the formal nomination package or should this information be sent separately?

A9: The Air Force is not looking for and does not want stand-alone proposals or additional information during the nomination process, extraneous information during the nomination process will not be evaluated.

Q10: What kind of format would be most helpful if the communities provide that additional information—for example, a text document that addresses each of the evaluation criteria? A PowerPoint presentation? A chart? Do you have any other guidelines on how this information can be provided by the communities?

A10: There is no need for communities to send any information other than the nomination letter at this time. During the evaluation phase, the Air Force will request the information needed to assess the evaluation criteria through questionnaires sent to the point of contact that communities provide in their nomination letter. There is no expectation or desire for communities to produce any sort of extensive proposal at any time during the process. However, it will be important for localities to fully and concisely answer the questions in the questionnaire, as this is the only information the Air Force will consider. We are not looking and do not want stand-alone proposals or additional information during the nomination process, extraneous information during the nomination process will not be evaluated.

Q11: Just to clarify - you are NOT looking for a stand-alone proposal? Does that mean one submitted will not be evaluated, or just not required?

A11: Correct, we are not looking for and do not want stand-alone proposals, and they will not be evaluated. The primary mechanism to obtain information during the evaluation phase will be via questionnaires. The questionnaires will require communities to standardize inputs in a manner that can be scored and communities should focus on completely and concisely responding to the questionnaires

Q12: One issue of particular interest to our office is whether community support under evaluation criteria is the new quality of life metric SecAF announced recently for strategic basing decision.

A12: Yes

Q13: The nomination/endorsement letter is due 30 June – should the screening and evaluation justification be sent at the same time?

A13: No, the evaluation criteria will be addressed after the nomination phase. Only the nomination letter is required.

Q14: Is Peterson still on the table?

A14: Yes, while Peterson is the named provisional location, if it meets the minimum screening criteria the local community may self-nominate Peterson AFB for evaluation as part of the permanent location solution.

Q15: What caused the re-evaluation of the location?

A15: In order to accommodate the organizational and personnel changes required to support the U.S. Space Force, the SecDef directed use of a different approach, one that leverages best practices from the Department of the Air Force's strategic basing process and Army's Future's Command stationing action. This approach expands the number of locations eligible for consideration to host the headquarters for U.S. Space Command.

Q16: We understand that only the letter will be accepted June 30th and proposals will not be accepted as there is no RFI or RFP at this point. Was the seven bullet point document intended as an RFP/RFI? What will happen if a metro sends a proposal with the letter June 30th? Will it be read and weighed in the decision making process? Or will it be discarded as it could influence a decision where it was not called for before June 30th? Thinking in terms of fairness based on what is asked and what is required June 30th. Will proactive proposal submissions before June 30th be read and will they influence the decision or will they be shredded?

A16: The screening and evaluation criteria are not intended to be the basis for an RFP, but will serve as the foundation for the more detailed questionnaires that will be used to score nominees and determine the candidate locations during the evaluation phase of the process. On 30 June, the Department is only looking for the Governor endorsed nomination letter. As long as a city meets the screening criteria and has the Governor's endorsement they will become a nominee. Additional information provided with nominations will not be reviewed nor-influence the decision in any way.

Q17: We understand the RFI/RFP process will begin after letters are received June 30th. Will the designated POC approved in the Governor's and Mayor's letter be the person the USAF/USSF reaches out to after June 30th to gain information? Will an RFP/RFI be sent out or will it be more of a questionnaire or back and forth conversation with the liaison for any specific points?

A17: Yes, the POC provided in the nomination letter will be the main point of contact throughout the process. There will not be a formal RFP process, the information required to score a nominee will be obtained predominately through questionnaires to ensure format and consistency of information received from nominees.

May 22nd Brief Q&A:

Q18: As far as nomination letters, is the Governor's signature required on a Mayor's letter or can the Governor Provide a separate letter.

A18: As Governors may nominate multiple locations from their states, they sign the same letter as the Mayor to ensure that specific community is endorsed by the Governor. The Governor may provide an additional letter if they desire, but it is not required and will not be treated differently or effect the nomination in anyway.

Q19: Will the decision in 2021 be final or is it only a stated preference that could change over the six year period before Space Command has a permanent home? Will each metros information used to weigh in the decision be made public?

A19: Early 2021 will be the announcement of the preferred & reasonable alternative(s) locations. This will be followed by all required actions under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Upon the successful completion of NEPA requirements, the preferred location will become the final Headquarters. There is no intent to alter this decision after early 2021.

Q20: Question related to the nomination of a community with an installation that is near multiple cities. I understand only one city to self-nominate and for one Mayor or Mayor-equivalent to sign the nomination letter endorsed by the Governor. In such case, any of the cities could be the formal self-nominator.

Q20a: Does it make any difference which city formally makes the self-nomination and how will that affect the data call?

The city that nominates is the city that must meet all of the minimum screening criteria. It is the city that will be evaluated throughout the evaluation phase, and will be the primary Point of Contact throughout the process.

Q20b: Will the data calls be affected by which city is the formal self-nominator?

If multiple cities are supporting the effort, that can be reflected in various portions of the questionnaires that will be distributed during the evaluation phase.

Q20c: That is, if one city nominates, will the data call be directed to that city and involve data for that city—which could affect the criteria?

It is the city that will be evaluated throughout the evaluation phase, and will be the primary Point of Contact throughout the process.

Q20d: Or will all data calls take in information for the entire metropolitan area and there will be no difference in the data if one city or another makes the self-nomination?

The nominee should be the lead city, and be the city most likely to host the headquarters. The data calls will be focused on the nominating city not the overall Metropolitan area.

Q21: If Mayor nominates, can nonprofit still be the point of contact?

A21: As long as non-profits can speak on behalf of the city, have the ability to provide the required information throughout the Evaluation Phase, and can have questionnaire responses easily endorsed by the Mayor, City Counsel etc., then they can serve as the Point of Contact.

Q22: Does Governor have to nominate specific City or State as a whole?

A22: The Governor has to endorse the nomination of a City Mayor (or equivalent) for a specific location and/or installation. The Governor must endorse each location separately; a blanket statewide endorsement will not be accepted.

Q23: Will the headquarters for the U.S. Space Force be collocated with USSPACECOM, or like the other services, will USSF be headquartered in Washington, D.C.?

A23: USSF HQs will be located in the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. like the other services. It will not be collocated with USSPACECOM.

Q24: How hard and fast is the livability score? What if we are real close?

A24: The data that is currently reflected on the AARP Public Policy livability index website is what will be used to determine eligibility. Data at the city level must meet the minimum screening requirement, which to be eligible is 50 or higher.

Q25: When will the livability index be evaluated? We noticed the data is from 2018, do you anticipate the data changing before the Air Force evaluates each city?

A25: The data that is currently reflected on the AARP Public Policy livability index website is as of June 2018 and is what will be used to determine eligibility, unless there is a significant update in June 2020, in which case we will reassess nominees on a case by case basis if needed. The AARP scoring will be by nominating city not select zip codes or the MSA.

Q26: Would a Joint Reserve Base count as a qualifying military base?

A26: Yes, Joint Reserve Bases are considered, however they must have the capacity to provide the required support services listed in the screening criteria

Q27: Are the scores on the AARP website for livability index the scores that are being utilized?

A27: Yes, the data that is currently reflected on the AARP Public Policy livability index website is as of June 2018 and is what will be used to determine eligibility, unless there is a significant update in June 2020, in which case we will reassess nominees on a case by case basis if needed. The AARP scoring will be by nominating city not select zip codes or the MSA.

Q28: What year data set will be controlling for AARP? Is this by ZIP code or city or MSA?

A28: The data that is currently reflected on the AARP Public Policy livability index website is as of June 2018 and is what will be used to determine eligibility, unless there is a significant update in June 2020, in which case we will reassess nominees on a case by case basis if needed. The AARP scoring will be by nominating city not select zip codes or the MSA.

Q29: Has there been clarification on the AARP data set controlling year? 2018? 2019? Will the data be considered by ZIP, City, or MSA? Does AARP aggregate in this way?

A29: The data that is currently reflected on the AARP Public Policy livability index website is as of June 2018 and is what will be used to determine eligibility, unless there is a significant update in June 2020, in which case we will reassess nominees on a case by case basis if needed. The AARP scoring will be by nominating city not select zip codes or the MSA.

Q30: What dates approximately do you see the new HQ being operational?

A30: USSPACECOM was activated on August 29, 2019 and is operating out of Peterson AFB as its provisional headquarters until a permanent location is selected. Initial Operating Capability and Full Operating Capability are conditions-based and no specific date exists. However, dependent on the amount of construction required at the final location, USSPACECOM should be operating out of their permanent HQs location by 2026.

Q31: Will the AARP number be by MSA, City, or ZIP for consistency?

A31: The AARP score will be assessed at the City level.

Q32: Will the information sent by each nominee be made public?

A32: No, feedback will be provided to each nominee but nominee submissions will not be shared publically.

May 27th Brief Q&A:

Q33: What is the definition of a “military base”?

A33: There is not a specific definition of a military base, as long as the installation can meet the minimum requirements laid out in the screening criteria. This can be an Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and National Guard installation as long as it can provide the services required.

Q34: And can there be more than one self-nomination from any individual MSA?

A34: Although, a single nominee per MSA is desired, as long as each city within an eligible MSA meets the minimum screening criteria, and are endorsed by the state governor, multiple cities from an eligible MSA can nominate.

Q35: Will proximity to SCIFs or other secured spaces be considered as part of infrastructure?

A35: Further information on the Evaluation Criteria will be provided following the nomination phase. However, due to USSPACECOM's Combatant Command Mission the majority of their facility space requires co-located SCIF space.

Q36: What office specifically will be running the evaluations? Will any part of the process be contracted or run by an FFRDC? If so which one?

A36: The Air Force Strategic Basing Office will manage the overall process. Contractor support may be required to help facilitate certain parts of the process to meet decision timelines.

Q37: Is there any downside to multiple nominations from a single state?

A37: As long as each city meets the minimum screening criteria and obtain the Governor's endorsement, multiple cities from a state can submit nominations.

Q38: How many "Final candidates" do you anticipate being part of the final evaluation phase after November?

A38: The Department intends to make the candidate selection at a logical "knee in the curve" based upon the evaluation criteria scoring. There is not a pre-determined number of candidates.

Q39: In what ways will this decision making process be similar to Army Futures Command? And is the AF confident that the Army Futures Command basing action fully considers the unique mission set of USSPACECOM?

A39: The main similarities between USSPACECOM and Army Futures Command is the framework, the civic engagement model, and partnering with municipalities to leverage non-standard, or off installation resources. In addition, similarly to Futures command, the Department is focusing on identifying communities where needed human talent relevant to USSPACECOM is located. The Department recognizes the significantly different mission sets between Army Futures Command and USSPACECOM. As such, the evaluation criteria highlight the warfighting focus and other differences in the mission requirements, yet still utilizes open source information in a similar a manner as Futures command.

Q40: Please elaborate on "Mission Related"—Space Command has a very specific mission set (detering and fighting conflicts that extend to space). Will you be counting all space-related missions such as space launch, building/designing satellites, etc. as equal to space warfighting? How will those conducting the evaluation be weighing those distinctions?

A40: Yes, all space missions will be counted. However, evaluations will be weighted toward those mission sets most directly tied to USSPACECOM.

Q41: Will the Air Force be considering incentives packages from states?

A41: The Department will have a clear scoring methodology for any incentives that will be provided in the questionnaires and will be reflected in the scoring. The goal is to minimize the initial investment cost to the Department of standing up the USSPACECOM Headquarters, while also being economical for communities.

Q42: Will things like geological stability and inclement weather such as hurricanes factor into the strategic basing decision making process?

A42: Climate and weather related factors are captured in the basing process in the form of building code requirements. These drive costs for the construction methods etc. needed to mitigate climate and weather related factors. As the one of the stated goals of the Department is to reduce costs in standing up USSPACECOM Headquarters, locations in less severe weather locales may be more competitive in when evaluated against certain cost criteria.

Q43: At any point in the questionnaires distributed from July-October, will the questions be directed to States rather than to the individual communities submitting candidate locations?

A43: The Point of Contacts provided by the Communities will be the mechanism by which the Department of the Air Force engages with the nominating communities. We do not anticipate going directly to States during the process.

Q44: At what point will communities be notified of their scoring?

A44: The Department expects to announce the candidate locations in November 2020. Communities may request a review of their evaluation scoring strengths and weaknesses following the candidates announcement on a time available basis.

Q45: Will the Air Force be willing to provide those scores (upon request) in advance of a preferred and reasonable alternative announcement?

A45: Communities may request a review of their evaluation scoring strengths and weaknesses following the candidates announcement on a time available basis. However, evaluation scoring will no longer matter following the candidate selection announcement, and the focus will be rounding out the evaluation assessments during the site visits.

Q46: Follow up statement: It might irrelevant for the sites selected as candidates but for the sites which are not selected will want to know where their weaknesses were.

A46: Communities may request a review of their evaluation scoring strengths and weaknesses following the candidates announcement on a time available basis.

Q47: To clarify on that point -- communities will know how many points different incentives are worth based on the questionnaire?

A47: The Department will have a clear scoring methodology for any incentives that will be provided in the questionnaires and will be reflected in the scoring. The goal is to minimize the initial investment cost to the Department in standing up USSPACECOM Headquarters, while also being economical for communities.

Additional Questions received via RFI Process (through 29 May):

Q48: It seems very ambitious to plan to assess 50+ locations and do all the environmental impact reviews in time to make an announcement by early 2021.

A48: We will not know the number of nominees until we receive all nominations by 30 June. The Department of the Air Force will evaluate the qualified nominees against established criteria from July through October, and select candidate locations in November. Site visits will occur at each of the candidate locations, followed by a preferred and reasonable alternative decision in January of 2021. Only then will the environmental impact process begin on those named locations to inform the final decision.

Q49: They were under the impression the time from decision to move-in was significantly shorter before (2-3 years vs 5-6 years). Why is it expected to take so much longer this go-round? It seems like the two time frames are switched.

A49: The original basing action for the USSPACECOM headquarters began before the 29 Aug 19 activation of USSPACECOM with a limited number of candidate locations. At that time, we determined that none of the candidates had available adequate space for the USSPACECOM HQ. Even then, we planned to locate the new headquarters in interim facilities while we constructed the permanent headquarters. Since that time, USSPACECOM was activated and the basing process restarted, expanding the number of locations eligible for consideration. During the basing process, USSPACECOM needs a place to perform its mission until the final location is determined, and the permanent headquarters is available for occupancy. If new construction is required, the Department anticipates it will take 5-6 years to program, design and construct the new facility.

Q50: The self-submission form is very short, is there more information that must be submitted to prove that the site meets the criteria? At what point will that set of requirements be released?

A50: When a city submits a nomination, the Air Force will validate the nomination against the minimum screening criteria using publically available data. All nominations that meet the minimum screening criteria will proceed to the evaluation phase. The requirements for hosting the USSPACECOM headquarters are reflected in the evaluation criteria provided to each state governor and congressional delegation and communities should review the evaluation criteria to inform their decision to self-nominate. The Department will release further details regarding the evaluation phase in late June through early July. The primary method of data collection for the evaluation criteria will be through standardized questionnaires provided to each nominating location. We will not use formal proposals as the responses to the questionnaires will provide the necessary information to evaluate each nominee.

Q51: Can the Air Force provide more clarification on what employment types and skills they recognize as beneficial for USSPACECOM?

A51: Utilizing Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the Department of the Air Force will analyze the quantity of specific Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) and Space related career fields pertinent to USSPACECOM hiring and long-term employment. The Department will release further information outlining the specific career fields that will be analyzed during the evaluation phase.

Q52: What is the timeline/data set the Air Force is using to determine topics like cost of living and house affordability/availability? Are they looking at January 2020 data, will they pull the data in November 2020, or will they use projected economic data for 2027, or an entirely different time frame?

A52: The timeframe for all data utilized for evaluation criteria scoring will be the latest/current publically available data, including government published data (housing allowance rates, area locality costs etc.) and relevant indexes. Every nominee will be evaluated against the same data set. Projected economic data will not be used. The Department of the Air Force will release further details regarding the data used to evaluate nominated locations during the evaluation phase.

Q53: The way I read the letter from SAF-IE Henderson, multiple communities in a state may self-nominate and a governor may endorse those communities if they meet the three criteria? So several qualified communities from one state may be endorsed?

A53: Correct, as long as each city meets the minimum screening criteria and obtains the Governor's endorsement, multiple cities from a state can submit nominations.

Q54: Can communities send in a packet explaining how they meet the scoring criteria along with the self-nomination letter or is the Air Force only accepting the one page self-nomination letter?

A54: Communities may provide information in the self-nomination letter outlining how they meet the minimum screening criteria, however we ask that communities not provide any additional information beyond the self-nomination letter. If additional information is provided it will not be reviewed or affect the nomination in any way. Additional information required for the evaluation phase will be collected via questionnaire following the nomination phase.

Q55: Once the self-nomination letters are received by the Air Force, what are the next steps for the community and state?

A55: Communities will be notified that they are a qualified nominee based upon the minimum screening criteria and will be provided with directions for the evaluation phase.

Q56: Are there any parameters for acreage needed or size, design, or layout of the building/buildings.

A56: Additional information on infrastructure requirements will be distributed during the evaluation phase, however approximately 400K-450K square feet of facility space will be required. The goal is to re-utilize existing infrastructure wherever possible to minimize costs to the Department.

Q57: Are there any specific skill sets of workforce needed –example: IT, COMMS, Engineering, etc.?

A57: Utilizing Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the Department will analyze the quantity of specific Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) and Space related career fields pertinent to USSPACECOM hiring and long-term employment. The Department of the Air Force will release further information outlining the specific career fields that will be analyzed during the evaluation phase.

Q58: Would you mind sending the appropriate links to determine if a city is in the top 150 MSAs, as well as the most up to date AARP Livability Index website in order to search for a city. The one I am finding is from 2018.

A58: All required information for the largest (by 2019 population estimates) 150 Metropolitan Statistical Areas can be found at the Census Bureau website: “<https://census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-total-metro-and-micro-statistical-areas.html>”.

The information currently provided at <https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/> is the data source that is used to determine the Livability Index for nominated cities. The data within the index is only updated as new information becomes available, generally from public sources etc.

Q59: Regarding the AARP Livability Index, can a city or location within qualify at the zip code level? For example, an entire city may not qualify with an index of 50 or above. But within the city there may be zip codes that do. If that is the case, do those zip codes qualify?

A59: The AARP Livability Index of 50 or above must be at the City level. Any city within an eligible Metropolitan Statistical Area that has a livability index greater than 50 is eligible to nominate.

Q60: Regarding proximity to a military base, does the base have to be within 25 miles by surface roads, or by air (“as the crow flies”)?

A60: This minimum screening criteria requires a proximity of 25 miles “as the crow flies” from the border of the Metropolitan Statistical Area to the fence line or gate of a specific installation.